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SCIENTIFIC NEWS.¹

— The commemoration of the Heidelberg University semi-millennial leads the London Times to a comparison of the ages of the several German-speaking universities. The oldest is Prague, founded in 1348; next comes Vienna, founded in 1365; Heidelberg follows, being the senior of the universities in the German empire, founded in 1386; then Leipsic, in 1409; Freiburg (Baden), in 1454; Greifswald, in 1456; Bâle, in 1460; Munich, in 1472; Tübingen, in 1477; Marburg, in 1527; Königsberg, in 1544; Jena, in 1558; Würzburg, in 1582; Giessen, in 1607; Kiel, in 1665; Halle, in 1694; Breslau, in 1702; Göttingen, in 1737; Erlangen, in 1743; Berlin, in 1810; Bonn, in 1818; Zürich, in 1838; Berne, in 1834; Strasburg, reestablished in 1872, originally founded in 1567.

— The honorary degree of Ph.D. has been conferred by the University of Heidelberg, Germany, upon Alexander Graham Bell, of Washington; Professor Edward D. Cope, of Philadelphia; Professor Othniel Charles Marsh, of New Haven; Professor Simon Newcomb, superintendent of the Nautical Almanac at Washington, and John W. Powell, director of the Geological Survey.

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PROCEEDINGS OF SCIENTIFIC SOCIETIES.

PHILADELPHIA ACADEMY NATURAL SCIENCES, March 2, 1886.—Professor W. K. Brooks, of Baltimore, spoke upon the development of *Podocoryne*. The planula settles upon and spreads over the carapace of a hermit crab. Two hundred to three hundred hydras, like fresh-water hydras, differentiated as feeding polyps, are developed. Another form of hydra, with short tentacles packed with poisonous lasso-cells, is produced next in order. Then follow the blastostyles, which neither take food nor are defensive, but are the seat of the medusa buds, which increase until they are larger than the entire hydroid community to which they belong, and are ultimately set free. In *Podocoryne* these medusæ are not the ultimate sexual form, but produce buds which are set free, develop reproductive elements and reproduce the planula stage. The crops are all male or all female. In the *Geryonidæ* a single egg becomes a single sexual individual, but passes through the planula and hydroid stages, which are true embryonic states. The *Cunina* larval colony which infests the jellyfish, *Turritopsis*, ultimately develops into medusæ without alternation of generations; but another species of *Cunina*, the history of which has been traced by a Russian embryologist, remains a budding stolon, from which other hydras are produced. Professor Brooks believes that alternation of generations, viewed in the

¹ Edited by WM. HOSEA BALLOU, 265 Broadway, New York.

light of these and other facts, does not arise from polymorphism, but from the power of the larva to develop asexually.

April 10.—Professor Heilprin gave an account of his collecting tour in Florida. Miocene strata were found at Rocky Bluff on the Big Manatee river. The rocks on both sides of the Caloosahatchie, until within fifteen miles of Lake Ochechobee, are literally crammed with fossils. The bottom of the lake consists of hard, clean sand. Eight or nine kinds of mollusks, two of fishes and a few annelids and crustaceans were all the fauna found in the lake. Vast wind-rows of dead fishes were found upon the seashore, owing to the severity of the winter.

Mr. Potts stated that in a collection of fresh-water sponges from Avalon, Newfoundland, made by Mr. A. H. McKay, he had found several new species of four or five genera. One species has both spindle-shaped and birotulate spicules, thus uniting two groups.

May 4.—Professor Heilprin described two human vertebræ from Sarasota bay, Florida. The bones, imbedded in ferruginous sandstone, had become converted into limonite. The cavity which once contained the head could be traced, and the head was known to have been present not many years before. The deposit was probably post-Pliocene, yet of great antiquity.

Mr. A. H. Smith referred to a log of hemlock that had been obtained, during railway excavations, at a depth of thirty feet from the surface in black earth which had once formed the bed of the Delaware.

May 11.—Professor Heilprin showed that Professor Le Conte's previous views regarding Florida were based upon an incorrect reading of the published researches of the State geologist of Alabama.

Dr. Leidy read a communication from Dr. Gonzalez, of Durango, Mexico, giving an account of the fatal effects which invariably follow the sting of the scorpion of that place, and asking for a mode of treatment, since all antidotes yet tried had failed.

Dr. Leidy read an account given by Mr. E. A. Rau, of Bethlehem, of a case of trichiniasis which resulted in the poisoning of a whole family and the death of the mother and a daughter. The pork eaten was home-raised, and the animal showed no sign of ill health. The meat was imperfectly cooked and had been fed upon for a week.

June 7.—Mr. Meehan exhibited a fasciated branch of a cherry with 400 branchlets, where there would normally be no more than twenty. A fungus, *Exoascus wilsneri*, allied to that which produces the curl in peach leaves, seems to be the cause of the growth.

Mr. J. Ford reported the occurrence of *Modiola tulipa* at Cape May and Anglesea. There is no previous record of this mollusk

north of South Carolina. Mr. U. C. Smith reported *Pholas truncata*, another mollusk new to the locality, from Anglesea.

Dr. Leidy exhibited fossils from the northern part of Nicaragua, consisting of remains of megatherium, elephant, mastodon, horse, ox, toxodon and capybara. The association of animals further illustrated the extension in North America of the South American Quaternary fauna. The capybara jaw, more robust than that of the recent form, might belong to a distinct species. It was the first time that remains of toxodon had been obtained in North America. The teeth agreed with those of *Toxodon Burmeisteri*.

June 8.—Dr. Benjamin Sharp reported that while studying the eyes of serpents he had found that in the poisonous snakes the pupils were elliptical, while in the harmless species they were circular. The only exception he was aware of was in the Elapidae.¹

The same speaker also stated that he had found that the reason that only the anterior face of the crystalline lens moves in the act of accommodation to distance, lies in the fact that upon pressure the elongated cells of the posterior wall of the lens become compressed in the direction of their long axis, and when the pressure is removed these simply straighten out.

Dr. Foote described the mines of Queretaro, noted for the quantity and quality of the precious stones yielded by them. Opal has been found in varying quantity over the entire area of a district twenty-five leagues by six. In color the opals equal the best Hungarian opal.

Professor Heilprin called attention to the fact that specimens of *Nassa obsoleta* and *Littorina saxatilis*, collected at Atlantic City a year ago, were stated by the lady who gathered them to be still alive, though for several months they had been near a heated wall surface.

Dr. H. Allen stated that in no case could muscles be properly said to be *fused*. The biceps of the cat simply overgrows the space originally allotted to it, and takes advantage of an adventitious surface of insertion. The pectoralis of man is composed of a single sheet folded on itself.

Dr. C. S. Dolley read a paper on Salpa.

June 24. Mr. Meehan described the Japanese oak, *Quercus dentata*, one specimen of which he succeeded in raising ten years ago. It was now eighteen feet high, and probably the only example in America.

Dr. W. P. Gibbons, of Alameda, Cal., spoke of the viviparous Embiotocidae.

¹ [It is known that many non-venomous snakes possess vertical slit-like pupils, while nearly all the venomous serpents of the sub-order Proteroglypha have the pupil round.—Ed.]